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LIMDIS

SUBJ: CAMBODIA — *Borders*

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1. SINCE YOUR MISSION TO PHNOM PENH, WE HAVE KEPT THE ISSUE OF AN APPROACH TOWARD RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA UNDER CONTINUING REVIEW. OUR INITIAL FEELING WAS THAT OUR WHOLE FOCUS SHOULD BE ON THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ICC, AND WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THIS CONCRETE STEP WOULD BE MOST USEFUL BOTH IN PRACTICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TERMS. HOWEVER, THE PASSAGE OF TIME, THE POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SIHANOUK'S RECENT STATEMENTS ON HIS INTERNAL DIFFICULTY WITH COMMUNIST ELEMENTS SUPPORTED BY NOT ONLY THE CHINESE BUT THE "VIET MINH," AND THE RECENT MESSAGE THAT SIHANOUK HAS SENT YOU, WHICH CAN BE CONSTRUED AS A VEILED OVERTURE FOR THE RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS, HAVE CAUSED US TO TAKE A MUCH HARDER LOOK AND TO CONSIDER POSSIBLE EARLY ACTION.

2. IN OUR WEIGHTING OF FACTORS, WE ARE BOTH ENCOURAGED AND DISTURBED BY THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE WITH ITS RECENT DECLARATION

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ON THE ~~BORDER QUESTION~~ - ANOTHER OF THE EVENTS ALL OF US HAVE BEEN WEIGHING. DESPITE THE INGENIOUS FORMULATION OF THAT DECLARATION, AND ITS FORMAL ACCEPTANCE BY CAMBODIA, WE CANNOT HELP NOTING THAT IT WAS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY (A) CAMBODIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S PUBLIC STATEMENT FEB 21 THAT DECLARATION PROVIDED "MORAL AND LEGAL SUPPORT" FOR CAMBODIAN CLAIMS AGAINST ITS NEIGHBORS; (B) PRIVATE REMARK BY HIM TO AUSTRALIANS THAT WHILE RKG DESIRED BORDER DECLARATION FROM US, THIS WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH. US WOULD ALSO HAVE TO "CEASE ACTS OF AGGRESSION AGAINST CAMBODIA." AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADORS DESCHAMPS IN PHNOM PENH AND WALLER IN WASHINGTON HAVE GIVEN IT AS THEIR PRIVATE JUDGMENT THAT UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS, IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE FOR US TO RUSH MATTERS.

3. IN OUR BROADER CONSIDERATIONS OF WHERE THE BALANCE OF ADVANTAGE LIES IN THIS MATTER, WE SEE A NUMBER OF FACTORS ON BOTH SIDES, WITH THE BALANCE SLIGHTLY IN FAVOR OF REESTABLISHMENT. AMONG FAVORABLE FACTORS WE SEE THE FOLLOWING:

A. IMPROVED COMMUNICATION. ON THE ONE HAND, AN AMERICAN AMBASSADOR ON THE SPOT WOULD AFFORD MORE DIRECT AND FLEXIBLE COMMUNICATION THAN WE NOW HAVE THROUGH DESCHAMPS. ON THE OTHER HAND, DESCHAMPS' PERSONAL CREDIT, HIS APPARENT ACCURACY, AND HIS ABILITY TO OPERATE IN A DISPASSIONATE ATMOSPHERE ARE COUNTERVAILING FACTORS.

B. IMPROVED ON-THE-SPOT CONTACTS AND INTELLIGENCE WOULD BE IMPORTANT FROM ONE POINT OF VIEW, BUT SUCH BENEFITS SEEM ON BALANCE LIMITED IN PRESENT ATMOSPHERE. CERTAINLY WE TAKE WITH MORE THAN A PINCH OF SALT SIHANOUK'S REMARK TO YOU IN JAN THAT AMERICAN MILITARY ATTACHE WOULD BE FREE TO CONDUCT INVESTIGATIONS IN CAMBODIA; BUT THERE MAY WELL BE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF CAMBODIAN SCENE WHICH WE MUST NOW DERIVE LARGELY FROM OTHER SOURCES.

C. IRRITATING CHICOMS AND DRV. IT HAS BEEN ARGUED THAT REESTABLISHMENT WOULD BY ITSELF BE WIDELY INTERPRETED AS SHIFT IN CAMBODIAN ASSESSMENT OF MILITARY SITUATION IN SEA AND THAT IT WOULD HAVE ADVERSE EFFECT ON RKG RELATIONS WITH CHICOMS AND DRV. WHILE IT IS APPARENT THAT SIHANOUK IS INCREASINGLY WORRIED BY LONG-RANGE COMMUNIST INTENTIONS TOWARD HIS COUNTRY, WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT HE WOULD SOON "BALANCE" REESTABLISHMENT

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WITH SOME SIGNAL TO CHINA THAT HIS ANTI-AMERICANISM HAS NOT REPEAT NOT BEEN MODIFIED. HE WOULD CERTAINLY SEEK TO INTERPRET REESTABLISHMENT AS DUE TO CHANGE IN AMERICAN, RATHER THAN CAMBODIAN, POLICY.

D. AMONG THE FAVORABLE FACTORS WE SEE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING AN EXPERIENCED DIPLOMAT ON THE SPOT WHOSE VIEWS COULD BE CONSIDERED IN POLICY DISCUSSIONS AFFECTING OUR RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA. WHILE THIS IS PART OF COMMUNICATIONS ASPECT, IT IS ALSO MORE THAN THAT. IN FORTHCOMING WASHINGTON DISCUSSIONS IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE QUICK ASSESSMENTS OF LIKELY CAMBODIAN ACTIONS AND REACTIONS FROM OUR OWN MAN IN PHNOM PENH, A SERVICE WHICH AUSTRALIANS CANNOT PERFORM TO SAME DEGREE. MOREOVER, DESCHAMPS' SIHANOUKPHILE TENDENCIES SOMETIMES APPEAR TO DISTORT HIS JUDGMENT, AS EVEN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT IS WELL AWARE.

ON OTHER SIDE, THERE ARE NUMBER OF DISADVANTAGES.

A. SOUTH VIETNAMESE AND THAI REACTIONS. YOU ARE AWARE OF THIS PROBLEM. WE THINK REESTABLISHMENT (AND BORDER DECLARATION) CAN BE EXPLAINED, BUT IT IS OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT TO PERSUADE OUR SEA FRIENDS THAT THEIR INTERESTS ARE NOT BEING SACRIFICED. IN THIS CONNECTION A MAJOR PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES EXPLORATION IS SET FORTH IN DETAIL FURTHER BELOW.

B. IN-AND-OUT. WE MUST AVOID SITUATION WHERE REESTABLISHMENT OF OUR EMB WOULD BE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY SOME UPROAR WHICH WOULD REQUIRE IT TO BE WITHDRAWN AGAIN. WE SEE NO WAY TO AVOID OCCASIONAL BORDER CROSSINGS BY OUR FORCES IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, AND WE CERTAINLY WOULD TAKE A MOST NEGATIVE VIEW OF ANY PRIOR "GUARANTEE" THAT WOULD GO FURTHER THAN YOUR COMMUNIQUE.

C. SECURITY AND EMBARRASSMENT CONSIDERATIONS. IN THIS CONNECTION WE RECALL STATEMENT MADE BY HIM TO HAMILTON FISH ARMSTRONG LAST YEAR THAT HE THOUGHT OUR INTERESTS BETTER SERVED BY NOT HAVING AN EMB IN PHNOM PENH BECAUSE IT WOULD BECOME TARGET FOR PHYSICAL ATTACKS. WHILE WE REALIZE THAT HE HAS TAKEN DIFFERENT LINE RECENTLY, WE WOULD NEED TO BE CONVINCED THAT AN EVENTUAL US MISSION WOULD BE PERMITTED TO FUNCTION NORMALLY EVEN IF THERE ARE DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN OUR GOVERNMENTS. MOREOVER, PAST EXPERIENCE CONTAINS ALL TOO MANY CASES WHERE SIHANOUK HAS MADE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES THE BUTT OF ONE OF

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HIS CHANGES OF MOOD AND RESULTING INTEMPERATE EXPRESSION. WE WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT WISH OUR REPRESENTATIVE TO BE A "HOSTAGE" TO SUCH EPISODES.

5. WE DO NOT REGARD THE PROBLEM OF AN EVENTUAL DECLARATION ON CAMBODIA'S BORDERS TO BE A LEGAL ONE. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT FORMULATIONS WHICH WOULD BE LEGALLY ACCEPTABLE, INCLUDING THE AUSTRALIAN ONE. (THIS IS NOT REPEAT NOT SOMETHING, HOWEVER, THAT WE WOULD WISH TO TELL CAMBODIANS AT THE PRESENT TIME.) PROBLEM IS POLITICAL, HAVING TO DO WITH SIGNIFICANCE CAMBODIANS WOULD ATTACH TO SUCH A DECLARATION, AND WHAT THE AFTERMATH OF OUR MAKING IT WOULD BE.

6. IN THE LIGHT OF THIS ANALYSIS, WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS ON THE FOLLOWING EXPLORATORY MOVE WHICH WE MAY BE PREPARED TO AUTHORIZE AT THIS TIME. WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT SUCH A MOVE, IF AUTHORIZED, WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT CONSTITUTE INITIATION OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE CLEAR TO CAMBODIAN SIDE. WE HAVE IN MIND THAT SPIVACK MIGHT SEEK INFORMAL OCCASION TO TALK WITH AMB NONG KIMNY, MIGHT REFER TO SIHANOUK'S RECENT LETTER TO YOU, SAY THAT WE INTERPRET IT AS EXPRESSION CAMBODIAN INTEREST IN AT LEAST DISCUSSING RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS, AND RAISE SOME QUESTIONS WHICH HE COULD SAY ARE CURRENTLY BEING RAISED IN WASHINGTON.

A. FIRST QUESTION IS WHETHER RKG REALLY THINKS REESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WOULD BE CONSTRUCTIVE MOVE AT PRESENT TIME. SPIVACK MIGHT NOTE RKG SEEMS TO BE HAVING TROUBLE WITH CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS AT THIS TIME AND THAT WE NOTE ONE OF ISSUES IS THEIR ACCUSATION THAT BOWLES MISSION REPRESENTED SELL-OUT TO AMERICANS. WE WOULD NOT WISH TO FURNISH PRETEXT FOR SUCH ACCUSATIONS.

B. WE WOULD APPRECIATE CLARIFICATION WHETHER BORDER DECLARATION IS SINGLE CONDITION ON CAMBODIAN SIDE. SPIVACK MIGHT MENTION PHURISSARA'S REMARK IN CANBERRA. (AS YOU KNOW, A THIRD CONDITION THAT HAS BEEN MENTIONED FROM TIME TO TIME IS COMPENSATION FOR PAST AMERICAN "ACTS OF AGGRESSION.")

C. IF US WERE TO MAKE BORDER DECLARATION SATISFACTORY TO CAMBODIA, WOULD IT BE UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS COULD IMPLY NO GUARANTEE AGAINST RECURRENCE OF TROUBLES ALONG CAMBODIA'S EASTERN BORDER SINCE THOSE TROUBLES ARE NOT DUE TO LACK OF RESPECT OR

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RECOGNITION FOR CAMBODIAN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. SUCH TROUBLES ARE OF COURSE DUE TO VC/NVA ABUSE OF THOSE BORDER REGIONS. SPIVACK MIGHT TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SAY THAT WE CONSIDER WE HAVE LIVED UP TO LETTER AND SPIRIT OF PHNOM PENH COMMUNIQUE. WE STILL HAVE NEITHER DESIRE NOR INTENT TO VIOLATE CAMBODIA'S BORDERS. AT SAME TIME, HE WOULD INFORM NONG KIMNY THAT ACTUAL LOCATION OF BORDERS IS NO REPEAT NO ISSUE BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND US. WE REGARD EXISTING DIFFERENCES OVER DEMARCATION TO BE TRIVIAL. WE ARE NOT SUPPORTING ANY FOREIGN CLAIMS TO CAMBODIAN TERRITORY.

D. FINALLY, DOES RKG UNDERSTAND THAT IF WE MADE MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY BORDER DECLARATION, WE WOULD HAVE TO GIVE PRIOR ASSURANCES TO CAMBODIA'S NEIGHBORS THAT SUCH DECLARATION DID NOT REPEAT NOT MEAN THAT WE WERE TAKING ANY POSITION ON PRECISE BORDER ISSUES. WE WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT HAVE IN MIND MAKING SUCH ASSURANCES PUBLIC, BUT IF RKG SHOULD PUBLICLY INTERPRET OUR DECLARATION AS IT HAS DONE FOR AUSTRALIAN DECLARATION, WE COULD NOT REPEAT NOT GUARANTEE THAT CAMBODIA'S NEIGHBORS WOULD NOT BE COMPELLED TO RESPOND BY MAKING CLEAR THEIR POSITION. AS RKG MUST BE WELL AWARE, CAMBODIA'S NEIGHBORS WOULD BE VERY MUCH MORE SENSITIVE TO THE MEANING OF A DECLARATION BY US THAN THEY HAVE BEEN TOWARD AUSTRALIAN AND OTHER DECLARATIONS.

7. IF EXPLORATION ALONG FOREGOING LINES IS AUTHORIZED AFTER RECEIPT OF YOUR COMMENTS, TWO THINGS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE VERY CLEAR TO NONG KIMNY:

A. AS INDICATED ABOVE, POSING OF THESE QUESTIONS TO HIM REPRESENTS EXPLORATION AND NOT INITIATION OF NEGOTIATIONS; AND

B. SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF ABOVE FOUR QUESTIONS DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY MEAN THAT WE WILL BE READY TO NEGOTIATE TEXT OF A BORDER DECLARATION. FYI. OTHER FACTORS, SUCH AS REASONABLE PROSPECT OF A US MISSION'S PERMANENCE, WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN DECIDING ON WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH NEGOTIATIONS.

8. FOR BANGKOK AND SAIGON: WE WILL ALSO APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS ON PARAS 3, 4 AND 6 ABOVE IN LIGHT OF RECENT SEACOORD DISCUSSIONS. WE ASSUME THAT IF NONG KIMNY EXPLORATION IS AUTHORIZED, DANGER OF PUBLICITY IS SUCH THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO BE EXPLAINED.

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BEFOREHAND IN GENERAL TERMS TO GOT AND GVN IN VIEW OF POSSIBILITY THAT EXPLORATION MIGHT BE PUBLICLY MISINTERPRETED BY SIHANOUK; BUT WE WOULD NOT HAVE IN MIND GOING INTO DETAILS SINCE IT WOULD BE EXPLAINED THAT CONTACT IN NEW DELHI WOULD NOT BE NEW DEPARTURE IN OUR POLICY BUT MERELY ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN INFORMATION WHICH WOULD PERMIT A BETTER ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBILITY OF NORMALIZATION OF OUR RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA.

9. FYI FOR ALL. AS A PART OF OUR OVER-ALL SCENARIO, WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT HAMILTON FISH ARMSTRONG IS TRAVELING TO ASIA AND HAS WRITTEN SIHANOUK TO SEE IF HE COULD VISIT PHNOM PENH IN EARLY APRIL. HIS STRONG PERSONAL TIE TO THE PRINCE COULD MAKE IT USEFUL FOR HIM TO CONDUCT DISCUSSIONS, EITHER ON HIS OWN OR WITH SOME AUTHORITY FROM US, THAT WOULD SUPPLEMENT AND FIT IN WITH THE NONG KIMNY APPROACH DEPENDING ON WHAT IT HAS PRODUCED BY THEN. WE ARE MAKING ARRANGEMENTS TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH ARMSTRONG IN ANY CASE. GP-3. RUSK

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